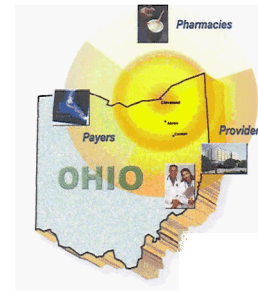


Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554



Re: Rural Health Care Pilot Project

Dear Rural Health Care Pilot Project Review Committee:

The Northeast Ohio Regional Health Information Organization (NEO RHIO) and its member organizations are pleased to support, partner and participate in the proposed OneCommunity Rural Health Care project. This initiative, designed to serve the Northeast Ohio Region, has been created in response to the Federal Communication Commission announcement for a Rural Health Care Pilot Program.

NEO RHIO was conceived as a response to an Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology Nationwide Health Information Network Request for Proposal (ONC NHIN RFP), released in September, 2005. This effort brought together the CEOs and CIOs of several large hospitals in the Cleveland-Akron-Canton metropolitan area (Akron General Health System, Aultman Hospital, Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron, Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Mercy Medical Center, MetroHealth, Summa Health System, and University Hospitals), along with multiple physician groups, pharmacies, and vendors, to discuss Health Information Technology (HIT) and Health Information Exchange (HIE) for the region. Since its inception, NEO RHIO has expanded its geography, stakeholders, and mission.

NEO RHIO's central reason for supporting OneCommunity's proposal is that it will provide core network resources necessary for the NEO RHIO to meet its mission. NEO RHIO was created as a broad-based collaboration between healthcare stakeholders who believe that sharing health information will improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of healthcare delivery in our community. In addition, NEO RHIO directly supports the continued development of healthcare as a leading industry in the region. Northeast Ohio already shines in the areas of healthcare, education, and industry. The growth of NEO RHIO, combined with an expanded broadband network, will place this region at the forefront of future efforts to advance healthcare and thus enhance the region's economic viability and growth.

NEO RHIO's first project links emergency department patients with their medical records that exist electronically at other locations. This project was selected partly because: 1) there is a demonstrated clinical / patient safety / quality / efficiency need for this service in our communities; 2) patients and administrators may be more comfortable with data sharing in "emergency" situations; 3) the scope is limited in terms of number of users, training needs, etc; 4) there are several other examples of ED data sharing to learn from; and 5) it leverages hospitals' existing IT infrastructure.

The future growth of NEO RHIO is expected to occur along the three axes of data sources, data users, and RHIO services offered. The selection and planning of NEO RHIO projects will be tiered and incremental in recognition of the complexity of the final vision. NEO RHIO, which started out as a project serving primarily urban communities, has seen its focus expand to many rural settings where supporting infrastructure is tenuous at best. The expansion of the Onecommunity network to rural facilities, care providers and patients will dramatically improve our growth and outreach.

Lastly, NEO RHIO supports Onecommunity because of their proven history and continued sustainability. Onecommunity has made significant progress in identifying innovative applications and services that take advantage of the physical fiber network that they have built and continue to build. They have successfully developed a network of non profit and for profit organizations applications that work collectively to realize the true potential this resource has to offer to the region and the health care of its citizens. Their use cases are clearly defined and meet the needs of the region.

NEO RHIO supports Onecommunity and the objectives of this proposal. If there should be any questions regarding this letter or related issues please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "B F Keaton MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian F Keaton, MD, FACEP
NEO RHIO Project Director